

The State: Where's the Jobs?

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Wilson: Where's the jobs?

Guest Columnist

By JOE WILSON

We all remember the Wendy's ad campaign, "Where's the Beef?" This iconic campaign triggered fast food consumers across the nation to take notice of the product - or lack thereof - they were receiving at the drive-through. Sometimes it takes creative campaigns like this to get people to notice they've been shortchanged.

Borrowing from the Wendy's playbook, I've started asking, "Where's the jobs?" because I believe the American people have been shortchanged when it comes to job creation policies. Congress has spent plenty of time and plenty of your money debating health care takeovers, energy taxes and spending increases - but no real policies to jump start America's economy.

Just last month, South Carolina's unemployment rate hit an all-time high at 12.3 percent. How high will unemployment numbers have to rise before the majority party finally straightens out Congress' misplaced priorities? Since Nancy Pelosi has been in the speaker's chair, 8.7 million more people are unemployed. What's more frightening is that 3 million of those jobs have been lost since the misnamed trillion-dollar stimulus was rammed through Congress less than a year ago.

Adding insult to injury, lawmakers cannot account for the stimulus jobs that your hard-earned tax dollars were supposed to create. The federal government's official Web site was reporting fake jobs in fake congressional districts. For example, it showed that \$3 million couldn't produce a single job in South Carolina's 43rd district - which doesn't exist. Somehow, \$1.8 million was spent for 1.4 jobs in the nonexistent 00 district. This might be funny if it weren't the taxpayers' money.

Recently, reports have gone from bad to worse. The Government Accountability Office reported that one out of every 10 jobs created by the stimulus is also fake. Reports show that Mark Penn, a Democratic pollster, received \$6 million in stimulus money to preserve three jobs. I cannot fathom how a pollster could receive enough stimulus money to sustain dozens of S.C. families for decades.

After weeks of reports on blatant inconsistencies in stimulus spending, the administration has yet to provide adequate answers as to the whereabouts of stimulus funds. In response, I have called for an outside audit of all stimulus dollars appropriated.

My legislation, the National Commission on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, will create a bipartisan commission to audit all money that has been spent by the "stimulus" bill. The 10-member panel, appointed by the President and Democratic and Republican leaders in the House and Senate, will investigate how many jobs actually have been saved or created by the stimulus bill. It also will examine the circumstances in which those jobs have been saved or created and the effectiveness of measures taken to prevent the improper use of funds.

It's important to find out where your hard-earned dollars are being spent. At the same time, we must keep asking "Where's the jobs?" to get congressional leaders focused on long-term job creation to give this economy the jolt it needs.

When I visit business owners and employees, I am reminded of our state's remarkable workforce and strong industries that can create and keep jobs in our communities. But South Carolina needs Congress to stop hindering and start helping small businesses and individuals get the job done.

Right before Thanksgiving, I was thankful to welcome Four Star Industries to Allendale County. The \$2.75 million investment that will create 50 new jobs is appreciated, as Allendale County's jobless rate was the highest in the state. Last month, I joined Ameresco's CEO George Sakellaris in Aiken as ground was broken on the largest energy efficiency project in the federal government's history. The state-of-the-art renewable energy facility is a \$795 million project that will create jobs in our state while reducing air emissions and energy and water consumption nationwide.

The recent economic commitments in our state from Four Star Industries, Boeing, Scotsman Ice, Dixie Narco and Ameresco came about because of incentives that the state of South Carolina has offered. The combination of low taxes, worker training, right-to-work protections and less regulatory red tape is a sound recipe to attract business. This common-sense approach must be applied at the national level.

We cannot stand by and watch more families cope with layoffs, survive on smaller paychecks or lose their homes while some in Washington are jeopardizing America's future by spending more, and increasing our nation's debt.

Mr. Wilson, a Republican, represents South Carolina's 2nd Congressional District.